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CIA takes on domestic police role

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The Central Intelligence Agency admitted last week it is training policemen in domestic intelligence surveillance in 12 U.S. cities.

The admission came in response to an inquiry from Rep. Edward Koch (D-N.Y.) who earlier this year revealed that the CIA had given special training to 14 New York City policemen.

Meanwhile, New York City Police Commissioner Patrick Murphy announced last week that the department was destroying some of its intelligence files with dossiers on 980,000 people. The announcement was an apparent attempt to offset a suit brought by a group of political organizations and individuals demanding that the police open up its files to public inspection.

The police reaction to the suit recalled the example set last spring by the Army. Faced with a Congressional investigation of its civilian surveillance, the Army announced that it was destroying the bulk of its files, leaving little left to investigate.

While almost a million names have been taken from the files, according to Murphy's announcement, nearly 250,000 names remain in the files. Attorneys who brought the suit contended that for the most part the police were simply removing files on individuals and organizations which either no longer exist or have long been inactive.

The CIA defended its intelligence training against Koch's charges, arguing that Congressional prohibition against CIA domestic activity did not apply to training civilian police agencies. Koch has demanded a Congressional investigation of the CIA's involvement with the New York City police department.

Commissioner Murphy hailed the file thinning as a "self-corrective mechanism" putting the department on "a course of self-examination and self-improvement." He cited his department as the first in the U.S. to develop written guidelines for processing intelligence information.

Now, Murphy said, the politics of an "object of investigation" would not, in themselves, be reason for "the initiation of an investigation." These decisions would be made on the basis of the belief that an individual or organization "might pose an immediate or future problem to the Police Department."

The implication was, however, that the 250,000 names still in the files—almost all for political reasons—are deemed "an immediate or future problem."

The police division in charge of controlling political activity is now called the Security and Investigation Section. Until recently, it was called Bureau of Special Services—BOSS. Before that, it was called the Labor Division since the intelligence section was originally founded to break up "illegal combinations," that is, labor unions.

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